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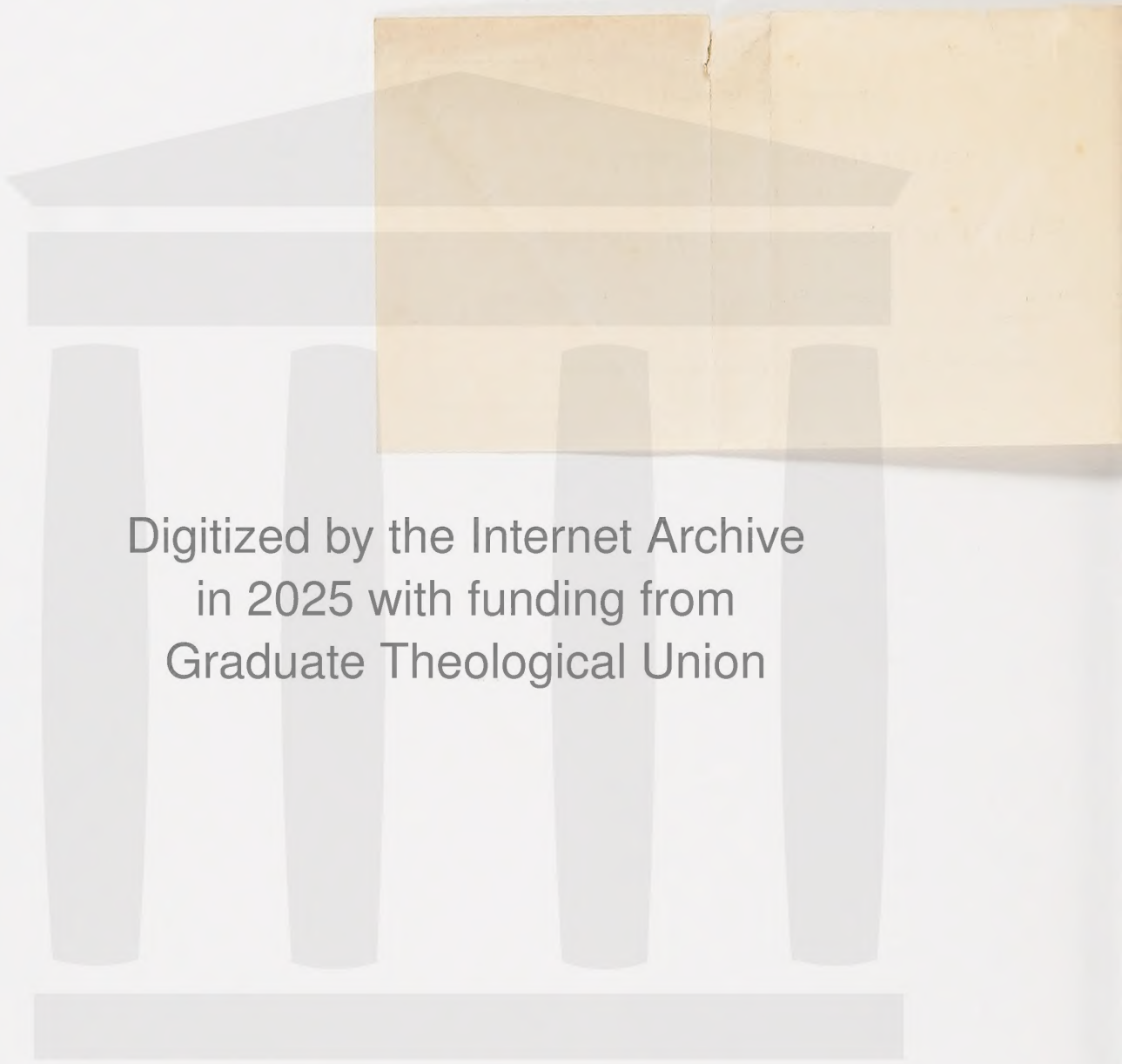

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BROWN VS. INGERSOLL.

Did the Great Infidel Petition for Repeal of the Laws Against Obscenity?

Rev. C. O. Brown Gives the Promised Proofs to Sustain His Charges.

[From the Dubuque Daily Times, Feb. 14th, 1888.]

An immense audience gathered in the First Congregational Church last Sunday evening, packing the large auditorium in every part, to hear Rev. C. O. Brown's address in proof of his statement that Robert Ingersoll had headed a petition to Congress asking for the repeal of the laws against obscenity, and in answer to Ingersoll's letter hitherto published in THE TIMES calling Mr. Brown "a liar" therefor. The audience was composed of the best people in Dubuque of all societies. The legal fraternity was largely represented, a number of whom have expressed their opinion that "Mr. Brown's argument is overwhelming and unanswerable." Such is the opinion of the vast majority of those who heard it. Mr. Brown introduced his address by saying: "I perceive by the complexion of this audience that the good people of Dubuque comprehend the gravity of the question which is now before us. I have before me no pleasant task. I would not needlessly trample on the foot of even "a dog." But I accept the issue. This is a matter of infamy either to Robert Ingersoll or myself, and when I have done this evening you shall judge whether I have made my assertion good." At the close of each of the three points of his argument Mr. Brown offered an opportunity to any friend of Ingersoll to say if he thought the point had not been completely and overwhelmingly proven. Mr. Brown spoke as follows:

Address.

On Sunday evening, Dec. 18th, in this room, I preached a sermon in which I reviewed the teachings of Robert G. Ingersoll. It is his boast that he is the knight-errant of a better morality than that of Christ and His religion. I examined that boast in the light of his record. I charged that Mr. Ingersoll had headed a petition to Congress, to repeal the laws which guard the United States mails against obscene, lewd, and indecent books, implements and pictures. I not only made the charge but I gave the proof, reading a verbatim report made by a Committee of Congressmen, in which Mr. Ingersoll is officially branded by name as the man who headed the list. That report made in the United States Congress, May, 1878, was printed in THE DUBUQUE TIMES, with a synopsis of my address, Dec. 21, 1887. There it stands on record, yet from every quarter of this State comes the demand that I shall prove my assertion. Let the friends of Ingersoll be patient. They shall have more proof than they want.

In response to this printed Congressional report which constituted my chief assertion, Mr. Ingersoll wrote the following genteel letter to some anonymous friend of his in this city:

Ingersoll's Letter.

"NEW YORK, January 10, 1888.—My Dear Sir: I ought to have answered your letter before,but (hic!) I would have done so, only that I have been exceedingly busy. The statement of Rev. C. O. Brown with regard to my position as to the carrying of obscene matter through the mails is a malicious falsehood. In the first place I never signed any petition of that kind. I have no doubt but what (hic!) I told somebody I was in favor of it, and some one put my name to a petition, but not of a character suggested by Rev. Mr. Brown. The petition was either that the law should be changed so as not to include infidel books, or what is known as liberal literature, or if such a change could not be made, that it be repealed. He further states that I went before a Committee of the United States Senate and pleaded before the Committee for the repeal of that law. This is an unqualified falsehood. Of course the Rev. C. O. Brown knows that I am as much opposed to obscenity as any man in the world. The Rev. C. O. Brown knows that one of my objections to the Bible is that many of its passages are obscene. The Rev. C. O. Brown knew when he made that statement that he was simply telling a lie. The Rev. C. O. Brown knows that he cannot answer my arguments. He knows that there is no possible way to get even with me but one, and that is by becoming a liar. Is it not wonderful that some men imagine that God really requires the services of a liar—that some men think that an Infinite God is willing to reward some of His children for telling falsehoods in His behalf? Of course I should not have thought of answering the Rev. C. O. Brown except for your letter. I have no time for reply to the poor little reverend dogs who bark at me; but you are at liberty to state and state publicly that Mr. Brown knew he was telling a falsehood. Yours very truly,

*"R. G. INGERSOLL."

The genuineness of this letter has been called in question. Some of Mr. Ingersoll's friends would gladly think it is a forgery. Its literary style isn't quite up to their boasts of his rhetoric, and its billingsgate shocks them. But they should remember that when a man is mad he doesn't always attend to the niceties of grammar. As to his billingsgate, that which he directs against me doesn't begin to be so shocking and horrid as that with which, in his speeches, he constantly assails the Deity. The letter is unquestionably genuine, because it tallies exactly with the persistent effrontery with which Ingersoll has denied a matter which was notorious, and which was the subject of a report made before the Congress of the United States.

I have said that the matter was notorious at the time. Joseph Cook took it up in one of the preludes to his Boston Monday lectures and reviewed the facts. Mr. Ingersoll then, as now, called Mr. Cook "a liar," and assumed that he had answered the facts. Shortly after Ingersoll's letter had been published in THE TIMES, I began to receive such letters as this from Rev. W. D. Mabry, Presiding Elder of Decorah District, M. E. Church:

"I made the same statement (about Ingersoll in 1880.) A man demanded the proof. I wrote to various parties, among others to Anthony Comstock. He replied as follows, &c."

*There is no longer any question that the letter is genuine. The person who received it is now known,

Here follows the statement of proofs which Mr. Mabry received. As they are fully covered by what I already had I will not quote his letter further.

Rev. Dr. Burrell of Minneapolis, and Rev. John Blanchard of Monticello, both wrote affirming their knowledge of the facts, from investigation at the time. I mention these letters not as any manner of proof but to show that the people have not been ignorant of the facts.

I make no abatement of the charge that Robert G. Ingersoll headed the notorious petition to repeal the laws against obscenity. My review of the facts has convinced me that the case is worse, if possible, than I had thought. I shall show (1st) that he signed or instructed another to sign that petition for him. (2nd) I shall show that the sections of the law whose repeal was sought by the petition, say not one word about "infidel books," or "liberal literature," but simply and only "lewd," "indecent," "immoral" literature, books, pictures and implements. (3rd) That Colonel R. G. Ingersoll's course, in the matter of attempted repeal, was not of such character as he hints in his letter. It wasn't something done before he had rubbed his eyes open one morning. He went into it deliberately, pursued it month after month persistently, and then met his defeat by calling every one a liar who said he had ever had anything to do with it. These are sweeping charges. If I cannot sustain them Mr. Ingersoll will have no need to content himself with calling me "a liar." If these statements are slanders they are slanders of such a nature as give him redress in the courts. He knows that full well. The man who could fight his way to one of the largest fees on record for successfully defending the Star Route plunderers, does not need to be told the legal bearings of this case. Joseph Cook has money. Why didn't he sue him instead of calling him a liar?

(1). The proof of my points involves a history. Let us take it up calmly and examine it. As long ago as 1842 certainly the business of printing and sending obscene stories and pictures to school children and youth throughout the land was begun. It grew to enormous proportions. The modes in which these scoundrels operate to debauch our children are various, but most frequently they send their tainted advertisements through the mails to young people whose names they secure from school and seminary catalogues. I could give here the testimony of scores of teachers who have detected and intercepted such matter on the way to their scholars. In 1868 a law was passed prohibiting this matter from the mails, but it was loosely drawn and inadequate. In 1872 Mr. Anthony Comstock began his work as the agent of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, whose officers are Samuel Colgate, President; Alfred Barnes, Wm. E. Dodge, Jr., John Paton, Vice Presidents; J. M. Cornell, Chairman Executive Committee.

In 1873, after long and careful deliberation, Congress passed the laws now known as the Comstock Laws for the suppression of this filthy literature, and for preventing its being carried by the United States mails. President Grant signed the bill. Very soon prosecutions began. It was found that the law would hold water. These vile panderers to the worst passions, these destroyers of child-like purity and domestic virtues were brought to account. Tons of their vile books, pictures and implements for procuring abortion were seized. Many of the guilty parties were convicted under the law and sent to serve out various terms in prison. Among those who were thus convicted and imprisoned for sending out obscene literature or implements was one D. M. Bennett, a libertine and free lover (see proofs pp 496 and 497 Frauds Exposed). This man was sent to prison for publishing and sending through the mails matter too obscene for public mention. In charging the jury the judge said: "Free lovers and free thinkers have a right to their views, and they may express them and publish them; but they cannot publish them in connection with obscene matter and send that matter through the mails" (page 473 Frauds Exposed). The Index, itself a liberal sheet, in its issue of November 20, 1879, says: "We defy anybody, even Bennett himself * * * * to pick out of this language anything that can be even tortured into an attempt on the part of either prosecution, judge or jury to try Bennett for his unbelief in the popular Christian theology" (page 473). Col. Bundy, an honorable liberal, says essentially the same, (page 471.) The fact is, as here admitted, that Bennett was imprisoned for unmixed obscenity and moral filth. Let these facts be borne in mind, for they have an important bearing upon Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll's claim that his part in the petition was designed only to secure the repeal of laws against infidel literature, for it was this very case of Bennett's from which much of the noise arose.

The good work of arresting such lepers as Bennett and seizing their vile books and pictures went on. Tons of the stuff were destroyed. For a time these lecherous destroyers of childish purity and womanly virtue were routed. Comstock and his helpers had the field. But the magnitude of the moneyed interests involved could not rest under such a throttling. The venders of obscene rot made common cause. They attacked Mr. Comstock with horrible libels in newspapers and pamphlets hoping to break down his reputation. Failing in that, they got themselves together in so-called "liberal" conventions, composed chiefly of such as themselves and free lovers. And right here I want it understood that I am not responsible for the fact that these people call themselves "liberals." They need, however, to be carefully distinguished from those honorable members of society, found largely in the Unitarian and Universalist churches styled "liberal," and who hold such characters in as great abhorrence as I.

The free-love and free-obscenity liberals, finding their way to freely distribute their filth through the mails everywhere blocked got up a monster petition to Congress, setting forth their grievances, calling the Comstock Laws unconstitutional, and asking that sections 1785, 2491, 3893 and 5389 might be repealed. The petition was

taken to Congress and duly presented in the month of February, 1878. This petition, said to contain 50,000 names and to be 2,100 feet long, can be found by any who care to read it, in full, in Mr. Comstock's late book. ("Traps for the Young" page 188). The original of the precious document is still in existence. The first name on it is that of "Robert G. Ingersoll, Chairman."

I wrote to Mr. Comstock concerning the official documents which I quote in this address, and promptly received the following reply:

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE—150 Nassau Street, Room 9. New York, Feb. 9, 1888.—Rev. Charles O. Brown, 79 Highland Place, Dubuque, Iowa.—Reverend and Very Dear Sir: Your esteemed favors of the 31st ult. and also of the 1st inst. at hand. * * * * In reference to the quotations in my books, as I said in my former letter, I made them with my own hand from the documents on file with the Secretary of the Senate of the United States, in Washington. The reports in reference to the House of Representatives would be found in the office of the Secretary of the House of Representatives. These are copies of official documents made with my own hand and verified as correct. * *

Very Truly Yours,
ANTHONY COMSTOCK, Sec'y.

Immediately after the monster petition for repeal had been presented in Congress, an Associated Press dispatch was sent over the country announcing that "Seventy thousand freemen, headed by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, have petitioned Congress to repeal the Comstock laws." The papers at Washington made much of this petition. Some of them, under the stimulating presence and patronage of many liberals, had daily editorials in favor of the repeal. Col. Ingersoll's name was the only one mentioned in these notices and flaming head-lines as connected with the petition. The Liberal press lauded him for being the foremost man in the movement. Where was Ingersoll? Right there in Washington was his home, and that movement in favor of filth had its head and center in him. ("Traps for Young," page 187). During the more than three months before the committee made its report to Congress, did he ever deny the place which his name occupied on that monster petition, or the honors of being its foremost man which the papers assigned him? Never! His name was there by his own hand or by his instruction. It matters not which. The law holds that a man is equally responsible for an act which he does through an agent. Mr. Ingersoll cannot creep out of this matter by saying that he never signed that petition. His letter directed against me admits that his name was on that petition with his knowledge and consent. As to what the petition asked for we will examine later.

Meanwhile during the time that the House committee was considering this petition, the free-love and free-obscenity lobby was actively at work, as the following letter on file with the petition at Washington will show:

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 23, 1878.—Hon. I. P. Christiancy, U. S. Senate, Chairman of Senate Committee on Revision of Laws.—Dear Sir: Will you be kind enough to give the committee, of which Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll is chairman, a hearing before your committee, upon the subject of repealing or materially modifying certain postal laws referred to in the petition of fifty thousand citizens, presented to the Senate by Senator Teller on the 12th inst., and referred to your committee. * * *

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
J. WEED COREY.

Sec. Com. of Seven for 50,000 Petitioners. 920 F. Street, Washington D. C. (Page 191, Traps for Young.)

Failing to get the hearing asked this same Corey wrote another letter on April 15th, 1878, of similar import, again asking that "Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, chairman of our committee," be allowed to speak before the Senate Committee on Revision of Laws, in behalf of the petition for the repeal of the laws against obscenity. ("Traps for the Young, page 192). Does any man in his senses suppose that all of this went on without Ingersoll's knowledge or consent? Does any one with these facts before him suppose for a moment that Ingersoll was not in full sympathy with these people who were seeking that repeal?

Meanwhile the committee of the House of Representatives, had been besieged by an army of "short-haired women and long-haired men" in behalf of the petition. They had been answered by Mr. Anthony Comstock and Hon. Samuel Colgate, of New York. The battle had been long and fierce, but decency triumphed, and on May 31st, 1878, the House Committee, headed by Mr. Bicknell, made the following report, which please read with great care:

Congressional Record.

"The Committee on the Revision of the Laws, to whom was referred the petition of ROBERT G. INGERSOLL and others, praying for the repeal or modification of sections 1785, 3878, 3893, 5389 and 2491, have had the same under consideration, and have heard the petitioners at length. In the opinion of your committee, the postoffice was not established to carry instruments of vice, or obscene writing, indecent pictures, or lewd books. Your committee believes that the statutes in question do not violate the constitution of the United States and ought not to be changed; they recommend therefore, that the prayer of said petition be denied." (Page 430 "Frauds Exposed.")

Whom did Mr. Bicknell and his other committee men *name* as heading the petition? "Robert G. Ingersoll." What does the Committee of Congress say that Mr. Ingersoll and his fellow-petitioners asked Congress to do? To open the United States mails to "instruments of vice, obscene writings, indecent pictures, and lewd books." Mark, this is not the charge of "a preacher." It is charged by a regularly constituted committee of the House of Representatives, in a report before that honorable body in May, 1878, which report is on file in Washington, to be seen by anyone who cares to be at the expense of looking it up.

Notwithstanding this overwhelming proof, Ingersoll has the effrontery to call every man who refers to it "a liar." Joseph Cook called attention to this Congressional report and Mr. Ingersoll answered the facts by saying: "Your a liar." Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage publicly referred to it and Mr. Ingersoll said in Brooklyn Music Hall in 1882 that Talmage "had lied," or words to that effect. With the facts before them decent people will judge for themselves who has lied.

I am ready to affirm now that I have proven, beyond doubt, that Robert G. Ingersoll did sign, or instruct another to sign for him, that petition asking for the repeal of the Comstock laws against obscenity.

(2nd) But Mr. Ingersoll affirms that he permitted his name to go upon that petition because he wanted to modify the laws which he claimed shut out "infidel books" or "liberal literature." (See Ingersoll's letter against Brown.)

On the contrary the sections whose repeal was asked, say not one word about "infidel books" or "liberal literature" and Mr. Ingersoll, who has been in this controversy for years, knew that very well when he wrote the letter calling me "a liar." [Mr. Brown here read all of the sections whose repeal was asked. They are all of like tenor as to the kind of matter prohibited. We cannot quote all as they are too lengthy. Whoever cares may find them quoted in full, page 401, "Frauds Exposed;" we will, however, quote the section 3893, which refers directly to the Postal Service and which is therefore the one most directly concerned, and in fact the only one to which Mr. Ingersoll's remark could refer.] It is as follows:

The Law.

"No obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphet, picture, paper, print or other publication of an indecent character, or any article or thing designed or intended for

[Mr. Brown here said: "There is another clause of the law which provides against another crime of similar nature in words which, though they are necessary in law, are ruled out of public speech. The entire law will appear in the printed report," resuming his reading with the words "nor any article."]

the prevention of conception or procuring abortion, nor any article or thing intended or adapted for any indecent or immoral use or nature, nor any written or printed card, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement, or notice of any kind giving information directly or indirectly, where or how, or of whom, or by what means, either of the things before mentioned may be obtained or made, nor any letter upon the envelope of which, or postal card upon which indecent or scurrilous epithets may be written or printed, shall be carried in the mail; and any person who shall deposit or cause to be deposited, for mailing or delivery, any of the hereinbefore mentioned articles or things, or any notice or paper containing any advertisement relating to the aforesaid articles or things, and any person who in pursuance of any plan or scheme for disposing of any of the hereinbefore mentioned articles or things, shall take or cause to be taken from the mail any such letter or package, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, for every offense, be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars, or imprisoned at hard labor not less than one year nor more than ten years, or both." (Page 401, Frauds Exposed.)

Mr. Ingersoll asked for the repeal of this law because he says it shuts "infidel books" or "liberal literature" out of the mails.

Very well, then, we have his own definition of "infidel literature." If this law shuts out infidel books it is because they can be defined as "lewd," "obscene," "lascivious;" for as you see that is the only kind of literature prohibited by the law. When Ingersoll says that he asked for the repeal of this law because it shuts out infidel books, he presumes upon the ignorance of the people. The fact is the law, as you see, says not one word about "infidel" or "liberal literature." The fact is that Ingersoll and his associates asked for the repeal of this law because it interferes with the most nefarious and infamous business ever transacted on this earth. It largely stops the business of turning the white hearts of pure little girls into the black hearts of brazen courtezans; it keeps the pictures of naked adultery from the hands and eyes of our boys and girls and thereby interferes with the gains of these venders of filth; therefore the repeal was asked.

(3). Colonel Ingersoll's letter refers to his entire connection with this matter as if it were a mere incident—something which one might do in an hour and forget in a week. Here again the facts are all against him. Recall what I said earlier in this address about the notorious, free-lover, would-be-bigamist, and ex-convict, D. M. Bennett, who was arrested in 1878 and imprisoned thirteen months, under the Comstock laws, for sending obscene books through the mails. Recall that the judge's charge, the editor of the *Liberal Index* and Colonel Bundy all declared in the plainest words that this man was imprisoned, not for being an infidel or liberal, but for sending obscene stuff through the United States mails. Keep this in mind and we are ready to glance at the liberal convention which assembled in Cincinnati, September 13 and 14, 1879, the call for which was issued by Ingersoll and others. There we find him in association with A. L. Rawson, an ex-convict and bigamist, (proof, pages 477, etc., Frauds Exposed,) who is Secretary of the gathering. There we hear Mr. Ingersoll sympathizing with the aforesaid infamous Bennett in the following resolution which he offered and which was passed with a great uproar of applause:

"*Resolved*, That we express the deepest sympathy with D. M. Bennett and his family, for the reason that he has been convicted by religious bigotry and ignorant zeal, and has been imprisoned, and is now languishing in the cell of a felon, when in truth and in fact he has committed no offense whatever against any law of this country."

Thus we see that in Mr. Ingersoll's eyes it was "no offense whatever" to send "vile literature," "obscene, filthy, literature" through the United States mails. Bear in mind the Index (liberal) had said that Bennett's offense was the sending of filthy, obscene, lewd, books through the mails. And this, Ingersoll says, is "no offense whatever." Bear this in mind the next time you read his finely fashioned words about virtue, purity, home and motherhood. Bear it in mind and you will understand the animus of his movement, in heading the petition of 50,000 for the repeal of the laws against obscenity.

The Cincinnati "Commercial," commenting on that resolution of Robert G. Ingersoll's said: "If society were based upon the principles taught in Bennett's book * * * * there would be a good-sized hell in every household and a very big hell in the community. This is a point Colonel Ingersoll has probably overlooked in his fury about the Orthodox hell. The Liberal League," it goes on to say, "as we predicted, has shown itself largely a Bennett aid league. *It plants itself on the platform of unrestricted dissemination of obscene literature.* Colonel Ingersoll, who is so violently indignant against all who charge him with favoring the obscene, proposed a resolution yesterday fully endorsing Bennett." That is the language of the Cincinnati "Commercial."

Look now at the above statements and then at the letter in which Ingersoll assails my former declaration. There he says: "Of course the Rev. C. O. Brown knows that I am as much opposed to obscenity as any man in the world." I answer: Robert, you are mistaken. C. O. Brown knows no such thing. He knows and has

shown by undeniable proof just the opposite. He has shown that a Congressional Committee brands you as the man, above all others, who sought the repeal of our laws against obscenity; he has shown that your name stood at the head of that petition before Congress and before the country, with your knowledge and consent, being discussed month after month and never being denied by you until you saw that it was unsuccessful and that it was a mark of infamy upon you before the world; then you denied, but it was too late. I have shown that the law (section 3893) has not a reference to anything but obscene, lewd, or lascivious books, etc., and therefore gives you no room to crawl out by affirming that you petitioned for the removal of restrictions on only "infidel books" or "liberal literature." I have shown that your companions and your action, in the Cincinnati convention, 1879, were all consistent—awfully consistent—with your previous efforts in behalf of the obscene. If you, in these matters, were in favor of purity, who ever in this world was in favor of filth? Do you not know that Judge Hurlbut, himself a reputable liberal, repudiated you in the *Index* of November 20, 1879, in the following words: "Ingersoll * * * must see by this time that he made a great mistake in calling spirits from the nasty deep—who were only too willing to come. So the Liberal League has been twice captured—once by the obscenists and again by the mephetic subterranean or 'digger' radicals." Remember these are the words of a liberal published in a leading liberal paper. Judge Hurlbut is not careful to say to which of the two classes Ingersoll belongs. Judge Hurlbut says, he calls "spirits from the nasty deep," but we are not told whether he is an "obscenist" or a "mephetic, subterranean, or digger radical."

I submit now that I have proven the three points which I affirmed I would prove, not by Colonel Ingersoll's style of argument and calling him "a liar," but by reference to the printed, official, unalterable, undeniable records. The main facts have been on record at Washington since May 1878. All that I have affirmed has been in print since 1880, the year when Anthony Comstock published his book "Frauds Exposed." You may find all of these facts and many more given with thrilling minuteness in that book, (pages 388 to 515.) A much smaller book by the same author was issued in 1884, which gives the main facts, (in chapter xii,) and charges these things home to Mr. Ingersoll in a way which gives him no room to escape.

This is no merely personal matter. It is one in which every fireside in this land is interested. It is time that every pulpit in America should take up these facts and show in its true light the great conspiracy to flood our homes with vile literature and obscene pictures; and it is time that those who have been influenced by Robert G. Ingersoll's horrible blasphemy against God, should understand just the nature of that beautiful morality which he would introduce among men. It has been said that he has a beautiful home and that his life in his family is unexceptionable. I hope it is true. But this I know, there are thousands of other beautiful homes in this land, where the flowers of parental affection and filial tenderness are to-day blooming in hearts of purity—homes which would have been smitten with the leprosy of lewd filth if he and his co-petitioners had succeeded in securing the repeal of the laws against obscenity. Let him enjoy his garden of roses, but let him not help to destroy the thousands of other gardens, whose beauty is as great and whose fragrance as sweet. Down to this time Anthony Comstock has destroyed forty-nine tons of the vile books, pictures and implements which would have gone through the mails to debauch the youth of this land had Mr. Ingersoll's petition succeeded.

I have only to ask in closing that those newspapers throughout the northwest which have copied Ingersoll's letter, shall now copy the proofs which show that all I said about him is true, and more than I charged him with is true. He not only sought the repeal of these good laws, but was in closest association with bigamists, free-lovers and prison convicts in the work of attempted repeal. I have given volume and page where the official proofs of every one of these serious charges may be found. I have usually met with fairness from the secular press. I believe that those who have copied Ingersoll's letter, and have since been clamoring for proofs, will be fair enough to me and to the cause to copy them now that the proofs are before them, even if it does require more space to prove a thing, than to call a man "a liar."

To provide for those papers which cannot give space to the entire address, I have given the substance of these proofs of Ingersoll's work in behalf of obscene literature in briefer form in the following open letter addressed to that person himself. Those papers which have copied Ingersoll's letter will see that the least they can do in fairness will be to give mine in response.

OPEN LETTER TO ROBERT INGERSOLL.

Robert G. Ingersoll—Sir: Some time ago I referred publicly to the report made by the committee on Revision of Laws, (Mr. Bicknell, chairman,) to the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, in which you are mentioned by name as having petitioned Congress to repeal the laws which prevent the United States mails from carrying "instruments of vice, obscene writings, indecent pictures and lewd books." * * * * * * *

Since these good laws went into effect, which you and your friends sought to overthrow, forty-nine tons of vile pictures, obscene books and indecent implements of the pimp and abortionist, have been seized and destroyed under these laws. Of this vast amount at least thirty tons would, if you and your friends had succeeded, have found way into the hands of school girls and boys, for to such the pictures and books are mainly directed. Can you, Robert, compute with pleasure what this part of your widening influence would have been? A myriad of innocent hearts tainted with vile thoughts; blushes of modesty transformed by the alchemy of hell into crimson shame, and that to brazen smiles in turn, 'till in a thousand or thousands of homes, as bright and happy as yours, the white lilies of purity were

changed to the night-shade of lust; and that because you who weave garlands of choice rhetoric and witchery of fine words for domestic virtues—you who talk beautifully of the sacredness of motherhood and the charm of maidenly purity, would if you could have opened the way for thirty tons of obscenity to assail maidenly eyes and stab maternal hearts. Alas that you should have attempted it!

Did you think, Robert, that I would be afraid and cowed into silence because the champion blasphemer of the nineteenth century chose to call me "a liar"? By so doing you put me in good company. You called Joseph Cook and Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage liars before me also because they charged home this deed upon you—men whose shoes' latchets you are not worthy to loose. I will confide to you that in my boyhood I used to think that it was the thunder which tore things. Haven't you learned yet that it is the lightning which hurts? Don't you know that the Congressional records are charged with righteous lightning which will split your fine pretensions to teach a better morality than that of Him who said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God?"

Take my advice. Don't try to head off every man who reads that record out loud; but keep your eye on Washington. It is there that your name stands recorded in the following official Congressional Committee Report, which was read by Mr. Bicknell in the House of Representatives May 31st, 1878:

"The Committee on Revision of Laws, to whom was referred the petition of Robert G. Ingersoll and others, praying for the repeal or modification of sections 1785, 3878, 3893, 5389, 2491 of the Revised Statutes, have had the same under consideration, and have heard the petitioners at length. In the opinion of your committee the postoffice was not established to carry instruments of vice or obscene writings, indecent pictures or lewd books. Your committee believe that the statutes in question do not violate the Constitution of the United States and ought not to be changed. They recommend, therefore, that the prayer of the said petitioners be denied." (Official files, Congress, p. 430 "Frauds Exposed.")

What does this report say you petitioned for? It says nothing about "infidel books"; it says plainly that you petitioned for the admission of "instruments of vice, obscene writings, indecent pictures and lewd books" to the United States mails. The "baby act" plea that some one else put your name there will not at this late day absolve you. Come now you are a lawyer; you know full well the force of that law which holds a principal responsible for the acts of his agent. *Quod fecit per alium, fecit per se.* Your name was at the head of that petition with your knowledge and consent. From February, 1878, till May of the same year, while that matter was before Congress, the papers rang with your name as being at the head of that petition, and you did not deny the responsibility or the questionable honor. (Page 187 "Traps for Young.") If the petition had succeeded you would have had the credit, as you afterwards did in the "Star Route" matter. Would you then have denied as you now deny? Did you ever deny it till Congress had branded the petition with its own proper infamy and you as its chief sponsor? In short did you ever deny until brought face to face with this matter by such teachers as Joseph Cook? Did you ever hear of any other prominent case in which the name of a prominent man was put at the head of a petition, with or without his consent, and kept there during months of notoriety unless he was in entire sympathy with the petition?

Your letter makes another reference which you know to be wholly untrue, as if you permitted your name to be at the head of that petition in order to secure the repeal of laws which kept "infidel books" or "liberal literature" out of the mails. The sections above named whose repeal you sought, make not one reference direct or indirect to "infidel books"—only to "obscene," "lewd" or "indecent" books. Only one of those sections refers to what shall go through the mails, namely 3893. The others refer, as you know, to the manufacture and sale of obscene articles. Section 3893, therefore, is the only one in question, and it is as follows:

"No obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphlet, picture, paper, print or other publication of an indecent character, or any article or thing, designed for,

[Mr. Brown here said: "There is another clause of the law which provides against another crime of similar nature in words which, though they are necessary in law, are ruled out of public speech. The entire law will appear in the printed report."],

the prevention of conception or procuring abortion, nor any article or thing intended or adopted for any indecent or immoral use or nature, nor any written or printed card, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement or notice, of any kind giving information directly or indirectly, where, how or when, or by what means, either of the things above mentioned may be obtained or made, nor any letter upon the envelope of which or postal card upon which indecent or scurrilous epithets may be written or printed, shall be carried in the mail; and any person who shall deposit or cause to be deposited, for mailing or delivery, any of the hereinbefore mentioned articles or things, and any person, who in pursuance of any plan or scheme for disposing of any of the hereinbefore mentioned articles or things, shall take or cause to be taken, from the mail any such letter or package, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and shall for every offense, be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars, or imprisoned at hard labor not less than one year nor more than ten years, or both."

Come now, Robert, own up; did you mean to say that you petitioned for the repeal of that law because, by its definition, it keeps "infidel literature" out of the mails? Will you admit that this law defines "infidel literature" or in any way prohibits it? Do you mean to say that on your own confession, infidel literature is "obscene, lewd or lascivious?" Robert, Robert, I gave you credit for a better opinion of your own books. You know, and knew all the while, that there is not

one clause in this section, or any other section whose repeal is asked, that refers directly or remotely to "infidel books" or "liberal literature," unless it can come under the above "obscene" definition.

If the placing of your name on that petition stood alone, it would still, prominent and notorious as that act was, be taken as a proper definition of your position on obscene literature. But that was not an isolated act. A duplicate of that same petition was sent to the United States Senate, your name still at the head of it, on the 12th of March, 1878. On the 23d of the same month, and again on the 15th of April as shown by letters on file in Washington, and as testified by both chairman and clerk of the Senate Judiciary Committee at that time, application was made for "Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, Chairman" to be heard before the Judiciary Committee in behalf of the obscene petition. Here are transactions reaching from February well into April, of which you could not have been ignorant. (Official files; also "Traps for Young" p. 191.)

More than a year later, in the notorious liberal convention held in 1879 in Cincinnati, on a call issued by yourself and others, you offered a resolution of sympathy for the free-lover D. M. Bennett, who had been convicted and was then in prison under the "Comstock Laws," for sending obscene books through the United States mails. Your course at that convention was so notoriously in favor of obscenity, that the "Index" a liberal paper, in its issue of November 20, 1879, repudiated and rebuked you. Judge Hurlbut and Colonel Bundy, both liberals, publicly did the same, the former saying in his letter that your work in that convention had "called spirits from the nasty deep." The Cincinnati "Commercial" also rebuked your course.

Your advocacy of the cause of this wretch Bennett and your close association in the same convention with the convicted bigamist A. L. Rawson, (see sworn proofs p. 477 "Frauds Exposed") go with all the other evidence to show that your course in behalf of obscene literature was not spasmodic or incidental; but persistent and horribly consistent with all of your conduct at that time.

But have I not seen the beautiful resolution which you offered at the Cincinnati Convention, declaring that you and Bigamist Rawson were "utterly opposed to the dissemination of obscene literature?" Oh! yes I have read it, Robert, with mingled mirth and indignation. There is a big wink in the corner of its eye. Honestly now, honor bright, did you manage to keep your face straight, when you offered that resolution, just after offering another in which you vociferously sympathized with one of the most notoriously vile and obscene wretches on earth? Robert, have you never noticed that no convention of saloon-keepers ever breaks up without passing a resolution in favor of temperance? and do not conventions of obscenists and free-lovers always put themselves on record in favor of moral purity? In one case the "temperance" is such as may be had at ten cents a drink; and in the other the "moral purity" is such as free-lovers practice. I commend for your perusal and inner digestion the following lines of the poet Gray:

> "The man of pure and simple heart,
> Through life disdains a double part;
> He never needs the screen of lies,
> His inward bosom to disguise."

You affirm that I am not able to answer your "arguments." That is just what I am doing now, or have done by reference to undeniable and official records; and that I am doing it so effectually is what makes you angry. In your speeches for years, your leading argument has affirmed the superiority of infidel morality and invited the examination which I have given the subject. When you make such claims in your speeches and such a record by your conduct in the matter of obscene literature, we have a right to bring these matters together in the light of comparisons and contrasts. That argument I have answered by showing that your ethics is the ethics of dirt.

If, for the rest, you mean that I cannot answer your "arguments" about "Moses" and your juggling with "Skulls," I will say it were a bootless task. Those "arguments" were answered nearly a hundred years before you cribbed the better share of them from the literary remains of Thomas Paine and Voltaire. When you look at your well thumbed copies of those venerated authors do you not indulge some personal reflections on the beauty and scientific truthfulness of that part of the despised Bible which saith: "The Ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib?" Your efforts in behalf of obscene literature would, if successful, have debauched the cradle; and your "arguments" have robbed the grave. Give me but another opportunity, by denying this, and I will number a part of your "Skulls" for you, and point out the graves whence you dug them. Come now, Robert, be honest; how much would your arguments amount to if you were to take out of them all that these dead apostles of your agnosticism taught you to say?

There are living men who have answered you again and again, forgetting that Churchill teaches us:

> "When fiction rises pleasing to the eye,
> Men will believe because they love a lie."

There are those, many, who will turn from the overwhelming proofs which I have herein given and applaud and believe your unsupported denial of the plain records. So it is with your other "arguments." Do you heed when you are answered? Or do you squirm, back water and come up smiling in another quarter? Answer Dr. Field's last article in "North American" like a man—not by some fling at "polygamy" or the "Amalekites;" but in a fair and manly way as you would be compelled to do if pleading before the Supreme Court. Answer Father Lambert. Until you have accomplished that, have done with your demand that this generation shall answer again the resurrected blasphemy of Thomas Paine and Voltaire.

I am aware that my language has been plain; but it has not been as severe as that of Paul the apostle in rebuking Elymas the sorcerer; "O! full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" I have not spoken like that to you, Robert, but I must be frank with you; I think you deserve it. In my opinion you are a more dangerous man than Elymas.

Your boastful effrontery in denying the record, as it stands against you in official documents at Washington must needs be answered in a way that shows you my mastery of the facts and my carelessness of your frown. By this time, perhaps, you are persuaded of both. Let me exhort you to patience. There is a long battle before you 'ere you can hope to shout down every man who quotes your record in the matter of obscene literature. Keep cool. The number of those who know the facts will be increased by a great many thousand, through the means of your last angry letter directed against me. Be patient; anger doesn't pay.

> "In mighty souls, passions, not soon suppressed,
> Like wounded whales, do struggle 'till they die;
> By their impatience they increase the smart,
> Provoke their pains and vex the stinging dart,
> Tossing the mighty mass 'till they're on ground—
> Their rage more fatal than their wound.

And now, Robert, a word at parting. Your years and glory are in their decline. You have drank to the full the cup of brief, intoxicating delight which any smart man may have who will prostitute his genius to blaspheming God and defying man. Other audiences will gather and applaud while you slander God, ridicule His word and delude the youth of this land. But your zenith is in the past. That kind of glory fades quickly, like the sunset which gives way to storm and lightning. Like the wicked Cardinal you must reflect:

> "I've touched the highest point of all my greatness:
> And from that full meridian of my glory,
> I haste now to my setting."

After that, what? "The evil that men do lives after them." Is it a pleasing prospect that (since on your own confession you "do not know") you may find yourself face to face with a righteous God who has said: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain?" Is it a pleasing prospect that into the dark unknown you may be followed by an army of those whom you have deluded, and who shall hold you in everlasting abhorrence whom once they applauded? Robert, turn from your blasphemies. Do what still you may to retrieve the worse than wasted years. "Call and thy Savior will hear thee; His mercies are infinite."

Yours Respectfully, CHAS. O. BROWN.

NOTICE.

This document has now reached its *Fourteenth Edition. Sixteen thousand copies are in circulation,* in more than three thousand cities and villages, and the demand from all parts of the country continues unabated. Many are contributing to its general circulation in addition to ordering copies for their own use. *In quantities of twenty-five or more the price is one cent a copy, post-paid.* Don't send postage stamps. Small coins are rarely lost in the mails. Eminent men from all parts of the land have written in strongest commendation. The following is from a lengthy editorial in the Boston *Congregationalist:*

> "Mr. Brown thus triumphantly demonstrated the points which he had made. He did more—particularly three things. He convicted the brilliant infidel of being a moral coward, capable of disingenuously skulking behind the shallowest pretexts in the endeavor to escape honest responsibility for things actually done by himself. He stamped upon him the ineffaceable stigma of leading against those laws the onset of free-lovers and of scoundrels. * * * And by printing the man's own letter, he has made it clear that Colonel Ingersoll is as far from being a gentleman as—by his energetic and perpetual affirmation—he must be presumed to be from being a Christian. Many thanks to Mr. Brown. He has faithfully performed an unpleasant duty, for which he deserves the gratitude of all good people, and especially of parents. And so far as that part of the community which usually flocks to hear infidel lectures may be open to conviction, he has made it impossible for Mr. Ingersoll again to gather an audience in any respectable locality."

> *Record of Christian Work,* Chicago: Rev. C. O. Brown has just done one of the most heroic things of his life, and has done it with such consummate ability and skill that every church and every home is made his debtor. He has attacked the arch infidel blasphemer, Ingersoll, at his most vulnerable point, and has shown and proven that this man who has been going up and down the land traducing Christianity—for liberal remuneration—was the advocate of the men who attempted to secure the repeal of the U. S. laws which forbid the circulation of indecent literature and appliances through the U. S. mails. * * * * This document should be sent to every home in the land where parents desire to protect their children from the vile creatures that would steal away the virtue and purity of our American youth, for the paltry gain it may bring to them. Mr. Brown has never done a braver or a better service for his country than he did when he delivered this address.

> *Church News,* Duluth: * * * "And now comes Rev. C. O. Brown, armed with the Congressional Record, * * * and reports of the free-thinkers' convention, where Mr. Ingersoll advocated the cause of a free-lover in a speech that disgusted even leading infidels so that they publicly disclaimed him. And in the most convincing manner, with due reference to chapter and page, the day and the year, he proceeds to give Mr. Ingersoll the most tremendous cudgelling, with his own public record, that has befallen any prominent man for several years. Mr. Ingersoll's explanation that he only argued for infidel books and not for obscene literature is shown to be absolutely and intentionally false, and he is left with no shelter whatever."

> *The American Baptist,* St. Louis: "The noted infidel has put himself in a tight place, by the help of Rev. C. O. Brown, of Dubuque, Iowa. (Here follows a resume of the address—ED.) So this great and blatant infidel is convicted of lying in his attempt to fasten a similar charge on another. To show the morality (?) of the man we quote the law he desired repealed."

> *Vermont Chronicle:* "Mr. Brown proves by documentary evidence, from congressional journals and from other sources, that Mr. Ingersoll did the exact thing he so boldly denies having done, and thus convicts him of gross falsehood."

> REV. A. H. ROSS, D. D., Pt. Huron, Mich.: "You do not leave him a pin to hold to. I wonder that he should have laid himself open as he did, or that having done a contemptible thing he should deny it with such vehemence. He seems mad that he may be destroyed. I wish I could circulate your reply throughout the State."

☞ In Ordering Copies, address Rev. C. O. BROWN, Dubuque, Iowa.